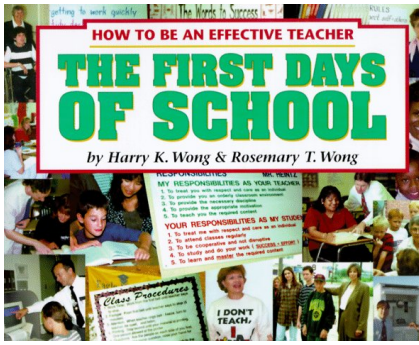


# Ideas on Classroom Management



Harry K. Wong is an award-winning teacher with over 35 years of experience in classroom teaching. He lectures to educators and administrators around the world. His book, *The First Days of School*, has sold over 3.5 million copies and has had four editions printed. *The First Days of School* is considered by many to be required reading for first year teachers. Harry is a native of San Francisco and is arguably the most sought-after motivational speaker in education today having given some 3000 presentations to over a million people. The March 2006 issue of *Instructor* magazine named him one of the 20 most admired people in education along with Maya Angelou, Howard Gardner, and Oprah Winfrey. He has received numerous other teaching honors.

## How to Speak to the Class

Stand up when you add the class, and speak in short clear sentences or phrases. Students have a way of turning off long, complex sentences. Your purpose is to establish authority and understanding, not to impress with your intelligence. Most important, students will gauge their confidence in you by how you say what you want to say.

You do not need to speak loudly. The most effective teachers have a firm but gentle voice. Learn to speak loudly" with your tone, not your volume. When you speak softly, the class listens carefully. You modulate the noise level of the class by the loudness of your voice. And on those rare occasions when you would need to raise your voice, you will have twice as much impact.

Learn to use nonverbal language. A nod, a smile, a stare, a frown, a raised eyebrow, or a gesture is often all that is needed, and it does not even disturb the class at work. Body language can speak volumes. Use it to manage the classroom and minimize disruptions.

## Myth: Removing your “problem child” or challenging student will solve all your problems

Every teacher, every professor, every educator ought to spend time in a kindergarten or first-grade class each year, just to look at and feel the excitement there. Children get excited about everything in the world. All the world is their stage, and there is nothing they cannot do, even though they cannot read, write, or spell. Yet they are ready to do anything you want them to do.

Then look at their teachers. They know that their charges cannot read, write, spell, or even speak correctly. Some of these students do not even know how to eat, use the bathroom, or hang up their jackets without help. Yet these teachers do not complain that they have a bunch of slow learners. Instead, their classrooms and their demeanor sparkle with an invitational attitude toward learning.

### **If Only the finest Birds in the Forest Dared Sing, How Quiet the Forest Would Be**

*If only the best readers dared read, how ignorant our country would be. If only the best singers dared sing, how sad our country would be. If only the best athletes engaged in sports, how weak our country would be. If only the best lovers made love, where would you and I be?*

*I would be tired!*

-William W. Purkey

### **Teacher and Child**

*I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom.*

*It is my personal approach that creates the climate.*

*It is my daily mood that makes the weather.*

*As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous.*

*I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration.*

*I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal.*

*In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized.*

- Haim Ginott

Teacher and Child. (1976). Avon Books.

## **Your First Priority When Class Starts**

**Your very first priority when the class starts is to get the students to work.**

Your first priority is not to take roll; it is to get the students to work immediately.

It is no different in the private sector. When your students go to work, as in a part-time job, they are expected to begin working at the appointed hour.

At the appointed hour, the part-time workers also know what to do. They do not stand around waiting for directions or ask questions like "What do you want me to do today?"

When class begins, you can easily get students to work if three criteria have been met:

1. The students have an assignment.
2. They know where to find the assignment.
3. They know why they are to do the assignment.

### **Daily and in the Same Place**

**Common sense and research on the effective classroom emphatically tell you to POST YOUR ASSIGNMENTS EVERY DAY!**

## **It's Prime Time**

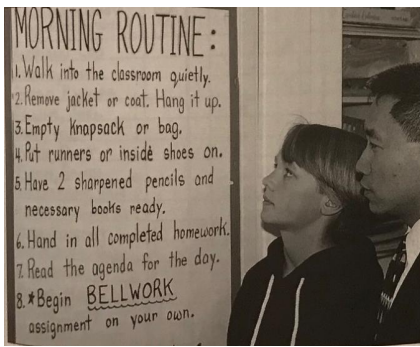
Prime time in school is the first few moments in a class. If you blow these moments, you blow the impression, the sale, and the success of a class.

The term prime time was invented by the television industry to denote the time when the audience is potentially at its largest. It is the most important time during the broadcast day; thus shows and sponsors jockey for position. That is why it is called prime time.

**Student on-task work is the major activity during academic prime time. The students must immediately get to work when they enter the room.**

An assignment must be available, and the students must know the procedure for getting to work immediately. (See Chapter 20.) Do not destroy prime time with non-prime-time activities such as taking roll, announcements, or paper shuffling.

An organized grade record book keeps time spent on roll taking and other record-keeping activities to a minimum. This is another practice of the efficient and effective teacher.



## ***Discipline with Your Body***

Not Your Mouth Calm is strength; upset is weakness. The effective teacher knows what to do to get a student calmly back on task. Practice these steps in front of mirror:

1. EXCUSE yourself from what you are doing
2. RELAX. Take a slow relaxing breath and CALMLY approach the student with a meaningful business look.
3. FACE the student directly and CALMLY wait for a response.
4. If there is no response, WHISPER the student's first name and follow with what you want the student to do, ending with "please." Relax and wait.
5. If the student does not get to work, RELAX and WAIT. Repeat Step 4, if necessary.
6. If backtalk occurs, relax, wait, and KEEP QUIET. If the student wants to talk back, keep the first principle of dealing with backtalk in mind: IT TAKES ONE FOOL TO TALK BACK.

IT TAKES TWO FOOLS TO MAKE A CONVERSATION OUT OF IT. When the student responds with the appropriate behavior say, "Thank you," and leave with an affirmative SMILE. If a student goes so far as to earn an office referral, you can deliver it just as well relaxed. After all, ruining your composure and peace of mind does not enhance classroom management. -Adapted from Fred Jones, Positive Classroom, *Discipline and Positive Classroom Instruction*

## ***What Are You Picking on Me For?***

*What do you say to the following three major questions asked by students worldwide?*

*What are you picking on me for? What did I do? Everyone else is doing it.*

*Why me?*

Stand in front of a mirror and practice the following 100 times until you can say it calmly and automatically every time one of these questions is asked:

Because you CHOSE to break the rule. Because you CHOSE to break rule *number x*.

Do not argue. Do not ask the student if he or she is questioning your authority. Do not yell, scream, or raise your voice. Just calmly say every time: Because you CHOSE to break the rule.

Because you CHOSE to break the rule.

After a few days or weeks, everyone will know exactly what you will say and they will stop asking "why are you picking on me?"

The key word in the phrase is CHOSE. Chose means that one is responsible and accountable for one's actions. You are teaching your students responsibility and accountability.

*The teacher is not picking on you. There are five rules in the classroom. The rules were discussed, agreed on, and signed. So when you CHOOSE to break one of the rules, you must accept the consequence.*

After a few weeks or months, if someone should ask you, "Why are you picking on me?" all you have to do is stand and smile at the student. The entire class will respond for you: Because you CHOSE to break the rule.